

**MINUTES of the Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices (First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, SN12 6ES at 7:00pm**

**Present:** Councillors Alan Baines (Committee Chair), Robert Shea -Simonds (Committee Vice Chair) John Glover (Council Chair), David Pafford (Council Vice-Chair), Shona Holt and Anne Sullivan

**Officers:** Teresa Strange (Clerk)

There were no members of the public or council attending remotely via Zoom.

**452/24 Welcome & Housekeeping:**

Councillor Baines welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone present was made aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

**453/24 Apologies:**

There were no apologies as all members of the Staffing Committee were present.

**454/24 Declarations of Interest: None**

**455/24 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting: None**

**456/24 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:**

**Resolved:** All the agenda items under 7, as they were about the recruitment of the Parish Officer and related to an individual. The Clerk advised that agenda item 10g also be in closed session, as included the protocol for Lone Working which would expose working practices designed to protect staff.

**457/24 Public Participation:**

This item fell as there were no members of the public present.

**458/24C Health and Safety:** To note any Health and Safety matters occurring since the last meeting (standing item as per the health and safety policy).

This item was held in closed session.

The Clerk reported that no new issues had been brought to her attention but gave an update on an issue raised at the last Staffing Committee meeting.

**Resolved:** The parish council close the case with the Insurance Company as no further issue or claim had been made.

#### **459/24C Recruitment:**

These items were held in closed session.

**a) To approve appointment of the Parish Officer following the recommendation of the Interview Panel**

The Interview Panel reported back from their recent interviews and on their recommendations. One reference and Right to Work paperwork had already been received.

**Resolved:** The parish council ratify the recommendation of the Interview Panel to make a conditional offer to Candidate 2 subject to receipt of suitable references and Right to Work paperwork checks.

**b) To agree the new Parish Officer start date of Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April**

The members noted the current staff leave before the Easter break.

**Recommendation:** The new Parish Officer start date to be after the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, starting on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025.

**c) To agree Parish Officer draft contract, based on parish council model version**

Members reviewed the draft based on the model parish council contract.

**Recommendation:** The new Parish Officer contract be as drafted by the Clerk and reviewed by the members.

**d) To agree salary scale point for new Parish Officer**

**Recommendation:** The Parish Officer starting scale point be Scale Point 5 which on the current rate from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 is £24,790 per annum, £2,065.83 per month, £12.85 per hour.

#### **460/24 Appraisals:** To receive update on current situation and agree way forward

The Clerk reported that the annual appraisals had been due to be undertaken in October 2024 but had not yet been undertaken due to the increased workload with one staff member having left in September, and the additional workload of shared projects, particularly of the Neighbourhood Plan. The recent approach was that a councillor accompanies the Clerk when undertaking the appraisals of those she line manages so there is another person present if there is an issue with the Clerk, and for that councillor to feed back to those undertaking the Clerk's appraisal. With the forthcoming Elections on 1<sup>st</sup> May, the Clerk queried if the appraisals were best to be done quickly or to wait until new councillors were in place post Elections.

**Resolved:** The appraisals to be undertaken in the late Spring/Summer with the new councillors in place post Elections.

**461/24** To review latest NALC advice note on **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace** following new positive duty for employers (councils) to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace

The members reviewed and noted the guidance issued by NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and their employment law, HR and health and safety services partner, Worknest, regarding the new positive duty for councils (as employers) to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, which came into effect on 26 October 2024.

Members discussed the merits and obligation of undertaking a risk assessment as suggested by the guidance and noted that they should review their current policies.

**Recommendation:** The parish council will take steps to ensure compliance to the new positive duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace by informing current councillors now as they will approve this recommendation at Full Council and as part of the Councillor Induction sessions post-Election, and to the new staff member as part of Induction. The other staff could have it as part of their annual training session when appraisals are undertaken and training refreshers on subjects like first aid. It would be covered by the Dignity at Work, Bullying and Harassment Policy which is due for review as part of this meeting agenda.

**462/24 To review the following Policies:**

The Clerk explained to members that in their agenda pack was a copy of the existing policy for review and where applicable, the latest NALC template that had been produced by their HR partner, Worknest. As these new template policies had been produced as fit for purpose for parish councils, she felt the review would be most effective if was more about ensuring that the council were able to adhere to the new policy with their current working practices, rather than a detailed review of any policy changes.

**a) Dignity at Work, Bullying and Harassment Policy**

**Recommendation:** The new NALC template **Dignity at Work Policy** be adopted but with a change to be consistent with the parish council's Disciplinary Policy in that any complaint about the Clerk or staff member goes to the Chair of the Staffing Committee and not the Chair of Council, so as the Chair of Council remains "untainted" or independent in case of a future Appeal.

**b) Car Usage Policy:** This was the parish council's own policy and not a NALC template. There was some discussion as to the mileage reimbursement rate of 45p or whether this should be referred to as the HMRC reimbursement rate with a query raised on whether there were different rates for fully comprehensive insurance or not.

**Recommendation:** The parish council adopt the policy as is, except for the fuel reimbursement clause with the Clerk to investigate the HMRC rate and eligibility and report back to the Full Council when the recommendation is considered.

c) **Grievance Policy:**

**Recommendation:** The new NALC template **Grievance Policy** be adopted.

d) **First Aid Policy:**

**Recommendation:** The parish council re-adopt their own First Aid policy.

e) **Pension Policy:**

**Recommendation:** The parish council re-adopt their own Pension policy.

f) **Social Media Policy:** It was noted that this is for annual review, and covers employees, volunteers and councillors. NALC have only written guidelines for writing a policy and not a template, as it differs for each council. The previous policy was based on a SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) template.

**Recommendation:** The parish council re-adopt the Social Media policy with just an update to the list of social media outlets that the council use.

g) **Lone Working:**

**Recommendation:** The new NALC template **Lone Working Policy** be adopted and the council's previous version be used to produce a risk assessment and procedure document.

h) **Home & Hybrid Working Policy:**

**Recommendation:** The **Home & Hybrid Working Policy** to be re-adopted with the addition of the words "both *and* under exceptional circumstances" to the sentence to now read "To be considered for **both** permanent home or hybrid working (**under exceptional circumstances**), you must submit a written application to the Clerk."

i) **Safeguarding Policy:**

The Clerk advised that the current policy states that the Clerk is the Safeguarding Officer and 4.2)b) "The Clerk will stay updated on relevant legislation, guidance, and best practices in safeguarding and ensure their implementation within the council". The members noted that the Clerk had sought advice and guidance from

Age UK Wiltshire, when acting as a third party without the vulnerable person's permission, when concerns had been raised about a resident by a member of the public and a councillor. A process is now understood, and the Clerk has that in writing.

**Recommendation:** The parish council re-adopt their own **Safeguarding policy**.

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025